BATMAN™ & THE JOKER™
THE DEADLY DUO

BOOK SIX

BLACK LABEL

MARC SILVESTRI – ARIF PRIANTO

17+ MATURE

DAWN OF DC

6 issues
APRIL

SUPERBOY
THE MAN OF TOMORROW

OUTGROWN YOUR SUPER-FAMILY? TIME TO GET A LITTLE SPACE.

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FORGING THE FUTURE ONE HERO AT A TIME

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SPECIAL THANKS TO

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SPECIAL THANKS TO

BRIDGET SILVESTRI

THE SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH ABOUT **DONALD SIMMS** AND HIS RESEARCH HAS LED DOWN A **DARK** ROAD LITTERED WITH UNFATHOMABLE HUMAN SUFFERING...

...A ROAD THAT HAS GROWN **DARKER** WITH EACH NEW DISCOVERY.

IN LOVING MEMORY
OF OUR DAUGHTER
AMANDA SIMMS
1992 ~ 2019

AMANDA SIMMS DIED ON HER WEDDING DAY AND WAS BURIED AT **GOTHAM CEMETERY.** AS **BRUCE WAYNE,** I ATTENDED THE FUNERAL.

TWO DAYS AGO, I VISITED HER GRAVE BECAUSE OF INFORMATION PULLED FROM SIMTEK'S DATABASE.

HER BODY WAS **GONE,** AND HER CASKET HAD BEEN **TORN** APART... FROM THE **INSIDE.**

GENETICALLY ENGINEERED SUPER-BEINGS, CREATED WITH TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPED BY **SIMTEK,** HAVE BEEN COMMITTING MURDERS ACROSS GOTHAM. THESE CREATURES ARE INFUSED WITH DNA TAKEN, PREDOMINANTLY, FROM **THE JOKER.**

THE TECHNOLOGY USED WAS THE RESULT OF **GROTESQUE EXPERIMENTS** CONDUCTED BY DONALD SIMMS ON INNOCENT PEOPLE. INCLUDED IN THOSE EXPERIMENTS WAS HIS OWN **DAUGHTER,** WHO HAS NOW COME BACK FROM THE DEAD...

...TO SEEK HER REVENGE.

BATMAN & THE JOKER
THE DEADLY DUO

CHAPTER SIX

REMAINS

THE CREATURES THAT AMANDA SIMMS HAD REFERRED TO AS HER ***CHILDREN*** CURRENTLY FILL THE CAVERNOUS RUINS OF ***POSEIDON STATION.*** I DON'T RESIST WHEN THEY TAKE MY UTILITY BELT AND BIND MY HANDS WITH COMMON ROPE. THEY DON'T SEE ME AS A THREAT. FOR THE MOMENT, I KEEP IT THAT WAY.

ABOVE US LIES 150 FEET OF WATER AND SOLID ROCK. BEHIND US, THE ***ONLY*** WAY OUT.

YOU DON'T SEEM VERY ***SURPRISED*** TO SEE ME, ***BATMAN.*** ODD, CONSIDERING THAT WHEN LAST WE MET, YOU LET ME ***DIE.*** BUT TO PARAPHRASE ***NIETZSCHE...***

...SOMETIMES, WHAT ***DOES*** KILL YOU MAKES YOU STRONGER. SO I THANK YOU FOR THAT.

AMANDA, I KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU--

YOU KNOW ***NOTHING*** OF WHAT HAPPENED TO ME. DO YOU REMEMBER BEING BORN? OF COURSE NOT. BECAUSE IN A RARE ACT OF KINDNESS, NATURE SAW FIT TO ENSURE OUR YOUNG ***MINDS*** COULD NOT COMPREHEND OR FEEL THE ***TRAUMA*** OF ***LIFE*** BEING FORMED. BUT IMAGINE THE ***HORROR*** IF YOU ***DID.***

IMAGINE BEING ABLE TO FEEL EVERY ***CELL*** IN YOUR BODY MULTIPLY, EVERY ***NERVE*** GROW AND CONNECT, TO FEEL THE PRIMORDIAL KNITTING OF FLESH AND BONE GNAW AT YOU LIKE A MILLION HUNGRY ANTS. BECAUSE IN MY ***REBIRTH,*** BATMAN, I FELT ***EXACTLY*** THAT.

WHEN I AWOKE IN AGONIZING DARKNESS, I FELT MY FINGERS BRANCH OUT AND CRAWL LIKE ***ROOTS*** THROUGH THE DIRT IN SEARCH OF THE ***NUTRIENTS*** NEEDED TO ***REBUILD*** MY ***DECAYING*** BODY...FOOD THAT COULD BE FOUND AMONG THE ***DEAD*** AND BURIED OF GOTHAM...AND AS THE DEAD ***NOURISHED*** ME, THEY BECAME ***PART*** OF ME...AND AS I ***FED,*** I ***LEARNED.***

SUDDENLY, I KNEW HOW EACH OF THEM LIVED, WHO THEY LOVED...HOW THEY DIED. THE DEAD GAVE ME THEIR DEEPEST SECRETS IN AN ACT OF INTIMACY THE ***LIVING*** COULD ***NEVER*** UNDERSTAND.

IN MY NEW FORM, I ABSORBED THE ***MEMORIES*** AND ***KNOWLEDGE*** OF GOTHAM'S BRIGHTEST ENGINEERS, SCIENTISTS, SCHOLARS...AND YES...

...EVEN ***RESEARCHERS*** FROM THE LABS OF SIMTEK INDUSTRIES. THERE WAS NO SECRET THAT COULD BE HIDDEN FROM ME.

I KNEW ***EVERYTHING.*** A THOUSAND VOICES SPEAKING NOTHING BUT ***TRUTH...***

...ABOUT ***EVERYONE.*** AND ALL OF YOU ARE HERE BECAUSE YOU HAD A HAND IN MAKING IT HAPPEN.

OH, FOR... ENOUGH OF THIS ***WOE-IS-ME*** CRAP, GOTHARELLA...

...I HELD UP ***MY*** END OF THE ***BARGAIN,*** NOW YOU HOLD UP ***YOURS.*** HAND IT OVER!

UM... WHAT?

SIT DOWN, JOKER.

YOU MAY THINK OTHERWISE, BUT YOU'RE NOTHING SPECIAL. LOOK AROUND...

SMAK

...I CAN MAKE AS MANY OF YOU AS I WANT.

CRASH

DID SHE HURT YA, PUDDIN'?

GEE, I DUNNO, I WAS TOO BUSY BEING UNCONSCIOUS. ANYWAY...

WE HAD A DEAL, LADY!

IS THIS WHAT YOU CAME FOR?

UUUUURH.

WHY IS THE CRAZY PERSON ASKIN' YA WHAT YA CAME FOR?

OH HARLEY, YOU ARE SO ADORABLY CLUELESS...

...NOW, DADDY, WHY SO GLUM? TODAY IS A DAY TO CELEBRATE! AREN'T YOU ***PROUD*** OF WHAT YOUR LITTLE GIRL CAN DO? LOOK AT ALL YOUR BEAUTIFUL ***GRANDCHILDREN.*** IT'S NOT EVERY FATHER THAT CAN SAY HIS DAUGHTER ***CREATES LIFE*** FROM HUMAN SCRAPS, YOU KNOW.

I...I'M SO SORRY, AMANDA, I DIDN'T MEAN TO--

DIDN'T MEAN TO ***WHAT?*** TURN ME INTO ***THIS?***

I...I TRIED TO ***SAVE*** YOU.

LIAR!

I WAS NOTHING MORE THAN A ***GUINEA PIG,*** A LAB ANIMAL SERVED UP AS A SACRIFICE TO YOUR ***AMBITION.*** YOU EVEN TRIED TO FIX YOUR OWN ***FACE*** WITH WHAT YOU LEARNED FROM ***EXPERIMENTING*** ON ***ME.***

WELL, TAKE A GOOD LOOK, FATHER, AND ***MARVEL*** AT YOUR ***SUCCESS.***

OH GOD... PLEASE--

AMANDA, LISTEN TO ME. REVENGE WON'T ***ERASE*** WHAT YOUR FATHER DID. END THIS AND YOU HAVE MY WORD THAT HE'LL FACE ***JUSTICE.***

I KNOW THAT YOU BLAME ME AND OTHERS FOR YOUR DEATH, BUT THE TRUTH IS--

TRUTH...?

LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT ***TRUTH.*** TRUTH IS ABSOLUTE. INFALLIBLE. PURE...BEFORE ***HUMANS, TRUTH*** WAS ALL THERE WAS.

WHAT I KNOW NOW MORE THAN EVER IS THAT HUMANS ***DESTROYED*** TRUTH. IN FACT, IT CAN BE ARGUED THAT MANKIND'S MOST NOTABLE CONTRIBUTION TO HISTORY IS THE ***INVENTION*** OF THE ***LIE.***

I AM GOING TO CORRECT THAT.

YOU SEE, BATMAN, I'M MORE THAN JUST A SEEKER OF TRUTH. I'M THE ARCHITECT OF A ***NEW GOTHAM,*** ONE DEVOID OF MALICE AND INCAPABLE OF DECEPTION. A GOTHAM OF ***MY*** MAKING, INHABITED BY ***MY CHILDREN.***

FROM THE GOVERNOR DOWN TO THE LOWLIEST OF STREET URCHINS, I CAN, WITH A SIMPLE SCRAPE OF SKIN, CREATE ***PURE*** VERSIONS OF ***ANYONE.*** ***MY*** GOTHAM WILL HOLD NO SECRETS.

YOUR VISION OF GOTHAM ISN'T THE UTOPIA YOU THINK IT IS. YOU CAN'T SIMPLY STRIP AWAY FREE WILL.

AH, BUT I HAVE A PERSPECTIVE THAT YOU LACK. I ***KNOW*** WHAT PEOPLE ***WANT...***

...AND THEY DON'T WANT ***FREE WILL,*** THEY WANT ***HAPPINESS.***

THEY WANT A GOTHAM WITH NO ***NEED*** FOR PEOPLE LIKE ***YOU.***

LET ME TELL YOU WHY...

NOW, FATHER, WHERE ***WERE*** WE?

THERE'S NO HOPE FOR AMANDA...I NEED TO MOVE FAST.

I GET THE JOKER'S ATTENTION.

MY *UTILITY BELT.* I HAVE NO CHOICE NOW.

AMANDA, PLEASE...FORGIVE ME...WHAT I DID WAS WRONG... I SHOULD HAVE PROTECTED YOU.

WHAT YOU *SHOULD* HAVE DONE, FATHER...

...WAS HAVE ME *CREMATED.*

gGHHH--

THIS, BATMAN, IS JUSTICE!

AMANDA, NO!

SHUK

SHAKT

JOKER!

ABOUT EFFIN' TIME!

CHUK

CHUK

HEY, BATS! CATCH!

JIM, TAKE THIS...AND MAKE YOUR SHOTS COUNT.

SNPT

I HOPE YOU GOT A **PLAN B,** BATS, 'CAUSE **PLAN A** KINDA **SUCKS!**

TOTALLY!

I TAP IN THE CODE...

BLIP

...AND INITIATE PLAN B.

EH?

fsssSSs

WHAT THE--

POP POP POP

PAMM PAMM PAMM

HELL?!

JEEZ LOUISE!

PAMM PAMM PAMM

ONE OF DONALD SIMMS'S **FAILURES** IN HIS SYNTHETIC CELL RESEARCH WAS **CATASTROPHIC RETROGRESSION** DUE TO THE BODY CANNIBALIZING ITSELF WHEN DEPRIVED OF **FOOD.**

I DEVELOPED A COMPOUND THAT **ACCELERATED** THAT PROCESS AND THEN VAPORIZED IT INTO A GAS. THE ONLY WAY TO **STOP** THESE CREATURES IS TO **STARVE** THEM.

THE JOKER'S SUIT SEEMED THE IDEAL DELIVERY SYSTEM.

DID YOU JUST BLOW UP THE JOKER?

NO.

THAT'S A SHAME.

WE NEED TO GO...

...I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG THE GAS WILL--

YOU THINK YOUR LITTLE ***TRICKS*** CAN SAVE YOU? YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE.

UNNN--

GORDON'S DONE NOTHING TO YOU...LET HIM GO.

YOU'RE IN NO POSITION TO MAKE DEMANDS, BATMAN. YOU ***ALL*** HAVE ***BLOOD*** ON YOUR HANDS...

HHSSSSSS!

HURRRR...

AND MUCH TO ***ATONE*** FOR.

...BUT WE'LL START WITH ***YOU.***

BLAM

YOU CAN'T STOP THE *FUTURE*, BATMAN.

HAVEN'T YOU FIGURED IT OUT YET? WHAT I AM?

GHHH.

I FAR EXCEEDED MY FATHER'S PATHETIC DREAM OF CREATING A *SUPER-SOLDIER*...

...I AM THE NEXT STEP IN *EVOLUTION!*

I AM THE *NEXT PHASE OF HUMANKIND!*

BLAM

SCREW EVOLUTION.

AAAAGHH!

THE GUN I GAVE JIM GORDON FIRES ROUNDS MADE OF A CONCENTRATED VERSION OF THE ***RETRO-GRESSION COMPOUND.*** IT WON'T KILL HER, BUT SHE'LL NEED TO RECOVER...

...AND THAT'LL BUY US SOME TIME.

HEY, BATS! YOU HAPPEN TO HAVE A PLAN THAT ***DOESN'T*** SUCK? MAYBE ONE THAT DOESN'T INVOLVE ME ***EXPLODING?***

HOW YA DOIN' OVER THERE, MY LITTLE MURDER MUFFIN?

DON'T TRY SWEET-TALKIN' ME. WHAT'S THE DEAL BETWEEN YOU AND ***FRANKENSKANK...?***

...AND THE ANSWER BETTER BE GOOD...

...OR YOUR JEWELS'LL BE HANGIN' OFF THE BACK A' SOME YOKEL'S PICKUP TRUCK.

URRRRH!

BLAM

AMANDA SIMMS FORCED AN **ALLIANCE** BETWEEN ME AND THE JOKER. SHE THEN DEVISED SCENARIOS IN WHICH THAT ALLIANCE WOULD **WORK.** AND NOW I KNOW WHY.

THE JOKER SAID HE "HELD UP HIS END OF THE BARGAIN" AND EXPECTED HIS **PAYMENT.** WHAT AMANDA WHISPERED TO ME CONFIRMED WHAT THAT PAYMENT WAS, I KNEW I COULD NEVER ALLOW IT...

...BUT I **CAN** USE IT TO MY ADVANTAGE.

THE GAS IS STARTING TO DISSIPATE. YOU GO WITH THE JOKER AND HARLEY QUINN. I'LL HOLD THEM OFF TILL YOU GET CLEAR.

NOT GONNA HAPPEN, OLD FRIEND. SORRY, BUT I'M **STAYING.**

I **WASN'T ASKING.** I WORK BETTER ON MY OWN...

...AND I MADE A **PROMISE** TO SOMEONE.

JOKER, YOU AND HARLEY TAKE **GORDON** AND WAIT FOR ME WHERE THE TRACKS END. ANYTHING HAPPENS TO HIM AND YOU'LL **NEVER** GET WHAT YOU **CAME** FOR.

FINE. BUT, BATS...

...YA BETTER NOT COME EMPTY-HANDED.

C'MON, LET'S GET OUTTA HERE.

JIM, GO.

BATMAN, I...

...I'LL SEE YOU WHERE THE TRACKS END.

ICK! SOMETHIN' JUST **SLITHERED** BY MY LEG!

OH, I'M JUST **REALLY** HAPPY TO SEE YA, MY LI'L **HAND GRENADE!** HEH.

NO SWEET-TALKIN' TILL YA TELL ME WHAT THE HECK WAS GOIN' ON BACK THERE.

WELL, IT'S KIND OF A LONG STORY--

HOW MUCH FARTHER, JOKER?

JUST UP HERE A BIT.

WORRY NOT, **JIMBO,** I'M SURE OL' BATTY BOY'LL BE POPPIN' UP ANY MINUTE.

WAIT, WHERE'S HARLEY?

OH, SHE'S BEHIND YOU, HOLDING A **BIG ROCK** OVER YOUR HEAD.

TIME TO **SNORE,** COMMODORE!

WHAM

JEEZ, YA LOOK LIKE POOP, PARTNER...

...WE WERE STARTIN' TO THINK YOU MIGHTA GOT YOUR TICKET PUNCHED BACK THERE.

WHAT HAPPENED TO *GORDON?*

HE SLIPPED AND BASHED HIS HEAD AGAINST A ROCK HARLEY WAS HOLDING.

TWICE.

I *SAW* YOU GRAB IT, BATS... NOW GIVE IT TO ME OR MISS QUINN HERE IS GONNA BLOW JIMMY'S *BRAINS* OUT.

QUIT SCREWIN' AROUND, BATMAN...TAKE A LOOK--

CREEPSHOW'S COMIN'...

...AND I'M BETTIN' SHE'S PRETTY PISSED.

IS THIS WHAT YOU WANT?
YESSSSSS.
COME AND GET IT.
OH, BATS...
HAHAHA
HAHAHA

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

...I WAS STARTING TO WORRY THIS WHOLE TEAM-UP JOKE WASN'T GONNA HAVE A *PUNCHLINE!*

TO BE CONCLUDED...

INKED PAGES BY

MARC SILVESTRI

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"SOMETIMES, WHAT DOES KILL YOU MAKES YOU STRONGER."

–AMANDA SIMMS

The Last Kryptonian-DCP